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Robert N. Morris, Southern Railway research manager, left, and James H. Nutter Jr., director of the railroad's new office of Municipal Waste Disposal, examine a model of a trash processing plant of the type proposed for use here. Morris holds a model of the building's exterior.

Southern Opens Drive to Sell Trash Service, D.C. a Target

By STEPHEN M. AUG

Star Business Writer

The Southern Railway opened a major sales effort today to handle the processing, hauling and disposal of trash for large cities along its vast system—and the first target apparently is the District of Columbia.

The Southern, in an announcement, said it had created an office of Municipal Waste Disposal, and offered to handle trash cheaper than it could be burned in municipal incinerators.

For a starter, Southern has obtained an option on 325 acres of vacant land 135 miles south of Washington about halfway between Lynchburg and Charlottesville. Southern officials intend that under their proposal it would take 12 years—at the rate of 1,500 tons of trash a day—to fill just 175 acres the site.

Second, Southern made available a letter written by Robert N. Hamilton, its vice president for marketing and planning, containing Southern's trash disposal service "would be priced in a range that would make it uneconomical for" the District to build and operate incinerators.

5th Incinerator Planned

The District plans to build a fifth incinerator at the site of the old Kenilworth Dump at a cost of about \$18 million. Cost of operating city incinerators averages between \$7 and \$8 per ton of trash—and this doesn't include either the capital cost of constructing the plant or of dumping the residue after burning, Southern officials contend.

The letter was written last week to Norman E. Jackson, director of the District's Department of Sanitary Engineering. He recalled that the railroad had been working since early 1968 on the program and had spent about \$100,000 to develop a plan under which Southern would open a plant within the District to shred garbage—paper, metal and the like—compact it into 2,000-pound 4-by-4-foot balls and haul it south in specially built cars.

The letter also noted that as far back as Jan. 30, 1968, Jackson had written Southern asking it would make a bid should a call for bids be made within three months.

Several Under Study

Jackson told The Star that the Southern proposal is one among several being considered. "We have talked to the Southern Railway along with other railroads along with other people—potential providers of services of this kind—trying to discover new ways of handling... what we've known to be mounting volumes of solid wastes that have to be handled now as well as into the future."

He said Southern had given him no estimate of the cost—and he expected none unless bids were requested for such a service. He added that no bids could be sought until the District has authority to negotiate such a contract and has the money to pay.

Hamilton, too, declined to discuss costs. But he conceded that while the railroad could not cut the cost in half, it would offer a service cheaper by more than 15 percent.

Involved would be first purchase of a 2½-acre site located near highways and rail transportation within the District—but away from residential areas. He said one had been selected, but declined to identify it.

Second would be exercise of the option on the Virginia land after approval of appropriate state and congressional legislation. Third, Southern would have to

knowing the large volume was here, we felt this was the place where we should start."

Although other railroads have sought unsuccessfully to transport trash for major cities, Southern contends it is the only one that will offer a total trash disposal system.

Inquiries Cited

Robert N. Morris, Southern's research manager, said the railroad had already had inquiries from such cities as Jacksonville, Fla.; Charlotte, N.C.; Atlanta, Richmond, Lexington, Ky.; New Orleans; Macon, Ga., and Chattanooga, Tenn.

If it receives authorization from the District, Hamilton said, the railroad could submit a bid within 30 days and would require 18 months to two years to get the project under way. The projected plant would be capable of handling about 2,000 tons of trash daily.

Southern estimates the Washington metropolitan area is expected to generate about 2.3 million tons of trash this year. By 1990, it predicts, this would increase to more than 3.4 million, and by 2,000 to 6.2 million tons.